

COMP 486 — Senior Seminar — Spring 2016
CRN 26279

Instructor: Phillip Kirlin
Meetings: TuTh, 3:30–4:45pm, Buckman 108
Course website: <http://www.cs.rhodes.edu/~kirlinp/courses/seniorsem/s16>
Email: kirlinp@rhodes.edu (please include “CS 486” somewhere in the subject)
Office hours: MW 2–3:30, TuTh 10–11:30, or by appointment, in Ohlendorf 420.

Course Overview: The Senior Seminar is the culmination of the computer science major’s experience in the department. In this class, we will work together to solve a research problem and contribute to the field of computer science. Your research problem was written and defined last semester as part of last semester’s Senior Seminar.

One of primary goals of this seminar is to expose you to state-of-the-art research in computer science. It also aims at developing a deeper understanding of the software design-process: detailing a well-defined problem, proposing and implementing a solution, and testing that solution. You should gain an appreciation of what it is like to work with other people to solve a larger problem.

Senior Seminar is an integrative course. It draws on all of the courses that you have had so far, including both general education and major courses.

Senior Seminar is a seminar. We each come to each class prepared to contribute what we have learned. Each individual will provide an update of what they have been working on and what they intend to do for the next week.

You will be expected to work together as a group outside of this class time and come up with ways of solving problems on your own. Each project should be updated using version control software.

At the end of the semester, you will present your work at URCAS.

Text and Other Resources: There are no books that you are responsible for purchasing.

If you find that you need a resource that is not available online or in the library, come talk with me about it; I have access to a small amount of funding that can be used to purchase books/software/equipment for this course.

It will be helpful to search the web for topics that you need further information on.

If there is a journal article or other paper that you are interested in reading and cannot access, please let me know and I will see if I can make it available to you.

You are welcome to use code that other people have posted online. However, you must make sure that you acknowledge the authors by commenting in the program and make it *clear* which portion of the code was incorporated into your program.

Prerequisites: This course is for senior computer science majors. There are no specific course prerequisites.

Coursework:

70% Weekly work and participation
10% Midterm presentation
20% Final Written Assignment and Presentation

Each team will give a midterm presentation in class on (tentatively) either March 15 or 17.

Each team will give a final presentation in class on April 28.

Each team will give a presentation at URCAS on April 29.

Final letter grades of A-, B-, C-, and D- are guaranteed with final course grades of 90%, 80%, 70%, and 60%, respectively. If your final course grade falls near a letter grade boundary, I may take into account class participation, attendance, and/or improvement during the semester.

Weekly Assignments and Participation:

Since you are working together on a large project, I will want to see weekly updates of the project. These will count as your “assignments.”

Each team has a project manager that is responsible for keeping the project “on-task.”

Each person is *required* to keep a log of the work they have been doing for the project in a Google document. The project manager is responsible for creating the document and sharing it with the team members. They are also in charge of how work hours are to be logged in the document. **Each team member must log ten hours of work per week** (except spring break). The time must be well-documented according to how it was spent. That is, for any time spent working on the project, you must explain what you were doing. It is not acceptable to be surfing the net (on an unrelated topic), talking on the phone, texting, etc., during your work period. You may count class time as part of these ten hours.

During class time, you are required to stay for the entire time period so that you can work with your group.

The project manager is responsible for making sure that everyone adheres to the timeline as outlined in your project proposal. They are also responsible for making changes to the timeline as needed.

The project manager is responsible for submitting an abstract to URCAS at the due date with the help of team members.

The project manager is also responsible for submitting and securing IRB approval, if needed.

Office Hours: In addition to regular office hours, am also available immediately after class for short questions. You never need an appointment to see me during regular office hours; you can just come by. Outside of regular office hours, feel free to stop by my office, and if I have time, I'll try to help you. If I don't have time at that moment, we'll set up an appointment for a different time. Don't be shy about coming by my office or sending me email if you can't make my regular office hours. I always set aside time each week for “unscheduled” office hours.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3885 as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, cheating, and similar anti-intellectual behavior are serious violations of academic ethics and will be correspondingly penalized. If you are concerned about a possible violation of this kind, please talk with me. I understand that being a student at Rhodes can be stressful sometimes and you will have many demands on your time. However, I would much rather have you turn in a partially-completed assignment or do poorly on a test than have you violate the Rhodes Honor Code. I can — and very much want to — help you if you don't understand the material, but violations of academic integrity will be dealt with harshly.

Unless otherwise specified, everything you submit in this course must be your own work and represent your individual effort. These are all included in the definition of reportable Honor Code violations for this course: copying all or part of a solution to a problem, downloading a solution from the internet and submitting it as your own, having someone else provide the solution for you, or allowing someone else to copy from you. If you have any doubt about what type of behavior is acceptable, please talk with me.

Diversity: A diverse learning community is a necessary element of a liberal arts education, for self-understanding is dependent upon the understanding of others. We are committed to fostering a community in which diversity is valued and welcomed. To that end any discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, gender, color, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, and national or ethnic origin, will not be tolerated in the classroom.

We are committed to providing an open learning environment. Freedom of thought, a civil exchange of ideas, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives are fundamental characteristics of a community that is committed to critical inquiry. To promote such an academic and social environment we expect integrity and honesty in our relationships with each other and openness to learning about and experiencing cultural diversity. We believe that these qualities are crucial to fostering social and intellectual maturity and personal growth.

Intellectual maturity also requires individual struggle with unfamiliar ideas. We recognize that our views and convictions will be challenged, and we expect this challenge to take place in a climate of open-mindedness and mutual respect.